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Instruction of the Deaf and Dumb in Articulation.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE INDIANA STATE SENTINEL:

Messrs. Editors:—Believing that the following extract from an article written by the Principal of the New York Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, and published in the one hundred and twenty-fifth No. of the North American Review, will be quite interesting to a portion of the readers of your paper, especially to those who are curious on the subject of teaching articulation to deaf and dumb persons, I hand it to you for publication at your first opportunity.

Yours truly, W. M. WILLARD.

"We have already noticed, with high commendation, this excellent paper; and we now return to it, not for the purpose of giving it any further examination as a whole, but in order to consider a single topic which is incidentally brought into it, and in respect to which we are compelled to dissent from the opinions expressed by Mr. Mann. We refer to the modes of instruction pursued in schools for the education of the deaf and dumb. Of the zeal and success with which Mr. Mann has devoted himself to the cause of popular education, it is unnecessary here to speak. We yield to none in the hearty appreciation of what he has already accomplished, and we bid him God speed in his future efforts. Upon subjects which he has studied and understands, we are disposed to receive his opinions with high respect, if not with implicit acquiescence. Even upon the subject of the instruction of deaf mutes, with which he is evidently not familiar, if he had based his conclusions upon any actual result attained, we should bow in silence to his verdict, however mortifying it might be to the self-love of our instructors, or injurious to the reputation and usefulness of our schools. But when we find, in a document of such general interest, emanating from such high authority, and destined for wide circulation through the country, a sentence pronounced upon the American institutions for the deaf and dumb, apparently without examination, evidently with very erroneous and defective views of their system of instruction, the effect of which will be to lower those institutions in the public estimation, and thus seriously to impair their usefulness, we cannot suffer it to pass in silence.

"We have usually thought that the superiority of an institution for education should be measured, not by what it attempts, but by what it performs. That the German schools attempt more than our own, we admit; but that, in the great majority of cases, they accomplish more, we have no evidence. Mr. Mann, at least, has furnished us no data whatever, by which we can compare the intellectual attainments and skill in language of the pupils in those schools with those of the pupils in our own. And if, as we have good reason to believe, the German teachers of articulation sacrifice, in a great measure, to the development of the intellectual and moral faculties of their pupils to object that is, in most cases, but very imperfectly attained, we may well doubt whether they gain as much as they lose, and whether their success in the true object of education—the unfolding of the capacities for happiness and usefulness—is as great as that of our own teachers.

"Among the American instructors of the deaf and dumb, there have been men as much distinguished for talents, learning, and zeal in the cause of education, as Mr. Mann himself. It would have been the part of fairness and caution to examine thoroughly and carefully the reasons in favor, and the results, of a system which such men have deliberately sanctioned, before condemning it; or, at least, not to publish so conspicuously, and upon very slight examination, opinions which do grave injustice to them and to the cause of instruction which they have patiently elaborated.

"It has not, therefore, been through ignorance or indifference, that American instructors have neglected to teach articulation. It has been excluded from the course of instruction after careful and mature deliberation, and, in the New York institution, after actual and patient experiment; not because the object was considered of little account, but because the small degree of success usually attainable was judged to be a very inadequate compensation for the expenditure of time and labor which the teaching of articulation exacts—for the many wearisome hours which must be spent in adjusting and re-adjusting the positions of the vocal organs—in teaching the 'seven sounds of the letter a'—the hundreds of elementary sounds, represented by only twenty-six letters, and the thousand capricious irregularities in the pronunciation of the same letters, which, in the German system, the deaf and dumb child, the acquisition of ideas, through his own language of gestures, is a task at once easy and delightful; but as words can never be to him what they are to other men, the acquisition of a language of words, whatever signs are chosen to represent them, must for him ever remain a labor that will task to the utmost his patience and his powers, and the skill and perseverance of his teacher. Why, then, should we, on a prospect of doubtful advantage, double a labor which already takes most minds to the utmost, and not a few beyond their powers?

"It may be alleged that the deaf mute who can only read and write cannot take part in a general conversation among persons who hear, but is restricted in such society to that conversation which may be addressed directly to him. Unless he has a ready interpreter, this is true; but as a general rule, this is just as much the case with those who have been taught to articulate and to read on the lips. On this point, most of the cases cited by Mr. Mann fall under the old maxim, that the exception proves the rule. The notorious fact, that the deaf, however laboriously instructed, can only distinguish words on the lips of those who speak directly to them, at a small distance, in an advantageous light, and with peculiar slowness and distinctness of utterance, is not affected by rare instances of the extraordinary development of the human faculty, any more than the general laws of the human mind on the subject of computation with high numbers are affected by such instances as that of Zerah Colburn.

"Mr. Mann asserts, that he has had 'abundant proof' that the deaf and dumb can be taught to 'speak as others speak, and substantially in all cases.' On this point we hold him to be widely in error. His assertions contrast strikingly with the modest statement of Kruse, himself, a deaf mute and teacher in the institution at Bremen, who, on this point, thus guardedly expressed himself: 'It is in many cases possible, in the course of some years, to bring the deaf and dumb to such a degree of proficiency in this respect, that all who listen to them attentively and patiently will fully understand them; and they can, also, on their part, come to understand, in some measure, what is said to them by the mere movements of the mouth.'

"Of the proportion of cases in which the wearisome labor of teacher and pupil is either thus imperfectly rewarded, or quite thrown away, we may judge from the testimony of Mademoiselle Morel, an intelligent and accomplished instructress of the Royal Institution of Paris, who, a few years ago, visited several of the most celebrated schools for the deaf and dumb in Germany. In the institution at Grund, in Wurtemberg, which has been the model school for several others in the neighboring States, out of thirty-three pupils, there were two or three who spoke with



BY G. A. &amp; J. P. CHAPMAN.

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"We admit that all deaf mutes of ordinary capacity may learn to utter sounds which, to those accustomed to hear them, may indicate which of a limited number of ideas is intended; but this mode of intercourse would, in many cases, be not only very disagreeable to strangers, but would to them be very often even less intelligible than the language of gestures. We also admit that all may acquire the ability to read a few strongly marked words on the lips of their acquaintances. The latter, however, seldom fail to learn from the deaf mute as many of his own signs as are necessary for the ready expression of simple and familiar ideas; and these signs being far more distinct, visible at many times the distance, and with much less light, the deaf mute will use them in preference. It is by no means true that those who read even very readily on the lips of their acquaintances, can read with any ease on the lips of strangers. We may add, that to read on the lips at all, beyond a few simple phrases and familiar words, demands a thorough skill in language, which many deaf mutes can never attain under any system of instruction.

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### Details of the Town of Trespacios, Texas.

This growing town will owe its prosperity, as all other seaports, to the facility with which ships can be brought to the quay, to the number of small rivers which empty in its and the neighboring bays, to the coast trade, and to the depth of water in the centre of its bay, and the salubrity of its situation. When in coming from the Gulf of Mexico, you have passed the "Still, if any thing approaching to this result could be, as a general rule, attained, we should be decidedly in favor of teaching articulation. But this is not the case. In a few other instances, the utterance was sufficiently intelligible; but Dr. Mann also witnessed the attempts at speaking of some who were incapable of uttering any tones which did not grate harshly on the ear, and was informed that the attempt to teach articulation frequently failed altogether.

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"It has," says Mr. Mann, 'an extraordinary humanizing power—the remark having been often made, and with truth, that all the deaf and dumb who have learned to speak have a far more human expression of the eye and countenance than those who have only been taught to write.' A very extraordinary power, indeed! It would be difficult to disprove a remark expressed in terms so vague, and so evidently depending on the imagination; but we much doubt whether any one not previously possessed with the idea of the humanizing power of speech, would have observed this more human expression. If the habit of watching the motion of another's lips gives any peculiarity of expression to the eye, it must be an expression different from that of human beings in general. Whether articulation has any other effect on the eyes of the deaf and dumb, we leave to those skilled in the occult sciences. It is not impossible that the habit of exercising the muscles of articulation instead of those of pantomimic expression, by favoring a fuller development of the former set of muscles, may create a perceptible difference of expression in those deaf mutes who are taught to articulate. If this is a 'more human' look, then we should expect the greatest benefactors to have the most human look. Whether this 'more human expression' is a sufficient equivalent for the tediousness of articulation, we cannot say. We can only say, to say nothing of the labor of giving this last finishing touch to the 'human face divine,' we leave the reader to judge.

"Till the advocates of artificial articulation can discover some mode of enabling the deaf and dumb from birth to conceive words as sounds, the question between them and us, accurately considered, is narrowed down to the choice of an alphabet. We teach the common written alphabet; they would teach the labial and oral alphabet. Both are addressed to the eye, and both may be aided by sensations of the movements—in the one case, of the fingers; in the other, of the lips, tongue, and larynx. We admit that the latter alphabet, once well acquired, would be, under certain circumstances, much the most convenient; but we hold that its attainment is in all cases very difficult, in many cases doubtful, and, in not a few, impracticable. We prefer, therefore, to teach an alphabet which can be learned with ease, which is within the capacity of all, and which is in this country almost universally intelligible as the other.

"We admit that all deaf mutes of ordinary capacity may learn to utter sounds which, to those accustomed to hear them, may indicate which of a limited number of ideas is intended; but this mode of intercourse would, in many cases, be not only very disagreeable to strangers, but would to them be very often even less intelligible than the language of gestures. We also admit that all may acquire the ability to read a few strongly marked words on the lips of their acquaintances. The latter, however, seldom fail to learn from the deaf mute as many of his own signs as are necessary for the ready expression of simple and familiar ideas; and these signs being far more distinct, visible at many times the distance, and with much less light, the deaf mute will use them in preference. It is by no means true that those who read even very readily on the lips of their acquaintances, can read with any ease on the lips of strangers. We may add, that to read on the lips at all, beyond a few simple phrases and familiar words, demands a thorough skill in language, which many deaf mutes can never attain under any system of instruction.

"We may further remark, that teachers of articulation are obliged to begin with the organs of speech, and are still liable, and thus to receive pupils at a much earlier age than our institutions did expedient or advantageous. It would appear by Mr. Mann's account, that they begin before their pupils are conscious that they exhale air; and we know that they receive pupils at the ages of six or seven, while our own institutions do not, except in rare cases, receive any under the age of ten, and some institutions not till twelve. We can only say, that the more costly experience of the Parisian school, loudly admonish us not to abandon a system which we have practised or seen practised for a quarter of a century, and which has been found to answer all the reasonable expectations formed from it—to adopt a system, which we believe to be founded on an erroneous philosophy, and the results of which, judging from all the evidence before us, we believe to have been, an average at least, less favorable than the results attained under our own plan."

The result of the late foot races in N. York show that our countrymen are no match for the Englishmen in that kind of work. We supposed the fact to have been satisfactorily established years ago. The whole experience of two was proved that, although the Americans were the best at fighting, the English were incomparably the best at running. It's all in practice.

—Louisville Jour.

a surprising degree of correctness; about the same number proved incapable of uttering a word intelligibly; and the mass of the pupils articulated with difficulty, often with contortions of countenance most unpleasant to the beholder; and, it is added in another place, were in general only intelligible to those who were in the daily habit of hearing them. A similar proportion of favorable and unfavorable results was found in other institutions.

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